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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Sept. 24, 1996

UM FRATERNITY ADOPTS ALCOHOL-FREE POLICY

MISSOULA --

Alpha Tau Omega has become the first University of Montana fraternity to voluntarily ban alcohol from its house and grounds, except in the rooms of members who are of legal drinking age, ATO President Dan Long said Tuesday.

The fraternity is one of seven with houses in University area residential neighborhoods.

"Basically, we're showing the community we do not revolve around alcohol," ATO President Dan Long said of ATO's Sunday vote. "We hope the whole Greek System will do this."

UM Greek Life Adviser Lynda Butler, who has asked all UM fraternities to adopt a substance-free policy, said it is very encouraging that ATO members acted on their own to adopt this policy. The All-Greek Council, representing all UM fraternities and sororities, will vote later this week on Butler's proposal to enact the substance-free policy in all fraternity houses. UM sororities already have no-alcohol policies.

ATO members have strongly supported this move as an effort to put the focus on traditional fraternity values of brotherhood and service, Long said.

"We don't feel that a lot is going to be affected by this," he said. "What makes us a fraternity is hanging out, going skiing together, doing things like that. This won't change that.

"We want people to recognize the Greek System for the good things that we do, not for parties and drinking," Long said.

The policy outlaws alcohol in any common areas of the fraternity house, on the grounds and in the rooms of members who are younger than 21, Long said. The policy also prohibits large

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theme parties, he said. The fraternity is proposing that it be able to celebrate several special events a year, including Homecoming, with small parties that would allow alcohol under the supervision of "a third-party vendor" who would make sure liquor laws were obeyed, he said.

The chapter's vote to restrict alcohol has drawn overwhelming support from the chapter's board of trustees and housing corporation -- a group of ATO alumni who own the fraternity house, housing corporation President Robert Minto said.

"I am very pleased that the chapter has taken a leadership role in this," Minto said.

"Somebody had to step up and be the first."

Public discussion of fraternity alcohol policies was spurred by fights earlier this month at two fraternity houses, but those incidents are not the source of this effort, Dean of Students Barbara Hollmann said.

"This has been on the table as a serious discussion item for the past two years," she said, praising ATO students and alumni for embracing the new policy.

"The University of Montana is not unique in its concerns regarding alcohol and Greek housing," Hollmann said. "This is a concern of organizations and campuses across the country."

"There are some real benefits in a positive Greek experience," Hollmann said. "Alcohol has become too great a focus and needs to be put in perspective."

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